



Evaluation of the English Language Fellows Program

Executive Summary

October 2003

Purpose of the Evaluation

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA), Office of Policy and Evaluation contracted with ORC Macro to conduct an independent evaluation of the English Language Fellows Program (EL Fellows Program). The evaluation focused on the outcomes of the program for the American Fellows and their foreign students and colleagues in numerous countries. This summary reports on the evaluation results and assesses the degree to which the program has reached its goals.

Overall Assessment of the English Language Fellows Program

The EL Fellows Program has successfully promoted greater knowledge and understanding among American Fellows' foreign students and colleagues of the English language, and of the United States and its people, history, and culture. In addition, the program has effectively contributed to increased understanding between the people of the United States and people of participating host countries. These conclusions are supported by the following study results:

- The EL Fellows Program results in increased understanding of American society, culture and politics by Fellows' foreign students and colleagues. More than 80% of Fellows describe their influence on this understanding as extensive (33%) or moderate (51%).
- Nearly 90 percent of Fellows gain a new perspective on their host country. Fellows report having gained many new insights about the host country (approximately 50%) and a completely new understanding of the host country's culture, language, society, government and politics (40%).
- About half of the Fellows believe they make a significant or moderate contribution to strengthening U.S. ties with the host country and to developing friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the U.S. and the host country.
- Fellows believe they make either a significant (27%) or moderate contribution (44%) to the educational and cultural advancement in their host countries.
- By Fellows' assessments, more than 75% of their students improve their English language skills – 33% improve significantly and 44% improve moderately.
- Fellows practice communicative language teaching methods through which they develop communication skills and encourage critical thinking. About 75% of Fellows consistently or sometimes relate English teaching to discussions on U.S. culture, democracy, economic reform, or human rights.
- Each English Teaching Fellow (ETF) instructs about 160 undergraduates annually, while the work of English as a Foreign Language Fellows (EFLFs) primarily involves improving the host country's English teaching infrastructure. As a result, Fellows and their work reach thousands of people annually in each host country – in both direct and indirect ways.

The evaluation addressed the following two objectives:

- Determine the extent to which the EL Fellows Program is achieving its legislative intent.
- Reveal the legacy of the Fellows' impact on the host country, especially self-sustaining changes in the type and form of the curricula, teaching methods, resource allocation and use, and other changes in the professional behavior of host country teachers and trainers.

The legislative intent for the EL Fellows Program is found in the Fulbright-Hays Act. This Act enables the U.S. Government to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The goals of the Fulbright-Hays Act are to:

- Increase mutual understanding between people of the United States and people of other countries.
- Strengthen the ties that unite people of the United States with other nations.
- Promote international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement.
- Assist in the development of "friendly, sympathetic and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world."

Project Information

ORC Macro conducted the evaluation of the English Language Fellows Program for the study period 1991-2001. The evaluation used two research modes—a survey of Fellows who participated during the study period and in-person interviews and discussion groups with the Fellows' colleagues and supervisors in the host countries. ORC Macro worked with ECA's U.S. partner organization, the School for International Training of Brattleboro, VT, to identify program alumni and current Fellows. These efforts produced records for 583 fellowships awarded to 367 individuals between 1992 and 2001. A total of 277 Fellows were located and asked to complete a questionnaire about their fellowship experiences and outcomes. Sixty-nine percent or 192 responded by mail, telephone, or email. The study team visited eight countries to capture the legacy left behind by the Fellows. They interviewed staff at U.S. Embassies about placements of Fellows. They also interviewed colleagues and supervisors in 58 host country colleges and universities about the contributions the Fellows made and what practices and materials remained.

Information on the EL Fellows Program

Originally, the English Teaching Fellows Program provided language training in non-English-speaking countries throughout the world. The program was refined and renamed the English Language Fellows Program (EL Fellows Program) in 1989 with the passage of the Support for Eastern European Democracies (SEED) Act, which provides assistance to the former Soviet satellite states of Eastern and Central Europe. The FREEDOM (Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets) Support Act (FSA) of 1992 added Russia and other emerging Eurasian countries to the program. SEED and FSA aim to move these states closer to the West and enable them to engage in economic, educational, cultural exchange with the United States. The EL Fellows Program was inaugurated to achieve these goals.

Since 1992, the Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, Office of English Language Programs has awarded more than 600 fellowships to Americans to improve the English language communication of citizens in more than 100 non-English speaking countries. Participating Fellows teach in classrooms and workshops, develop curricula, and perform other related instructional

activities. *English Teaching Fellows* (ETFs) are recent Master's degree-level English language specialists who primarily teach undergraduate courses. *English as a Foreign Language Fellows* (EFLFs) are experienced English language professionals who generally train educators and professionals who already have an undergraduate degree.

Fellows introduce the use of communicative language teaching methods to the teachers they train and model such methods in their classrooms. These methods encourage communications and critical thinking rather than the mechanics of the English language. The effective communicative classroom serves as a platform to express opinions, discuss contemporary issues, and talk about the American people, and U.S. culture, history, etc.

Summary of Study Findings

ORC Macro, working closely with ECA's Office of Policy and Evaluation, identified program outcomes and prepared research questions that provided the foundation for the study. The program outcomes and research questions were grouped into six major themes addressing the key goals of the EL Fellows Program:

- Achievement of legislative goals
- Professional legacies
- Cultural legacies
- Accomplishments of Fellows
- Cultural and professional development of Fellows
- Results for Fellows' foreign students, trainees, colleagues, and host institutions

The study findings are organized by these themes.

Achievement of Legislative Goals— Mutual Understanding, Trust, Culture, and Education

Colleagues' and Students' Increased Understanding of U.S. Society, Culture, and Politics

An important impact of the Fellows is increased understanding of U.S. society, culture, and politics among host country students and colleagues. Overall, more than 80 percent of Fellows believe their influence on this understanding is extensive (33%) or moderate (51%). More EFLFs rate their influence on increased understanding of U.S. society, culture and politics as extensive compared with their ETF counterparts who tend to rate their influence as moderate.

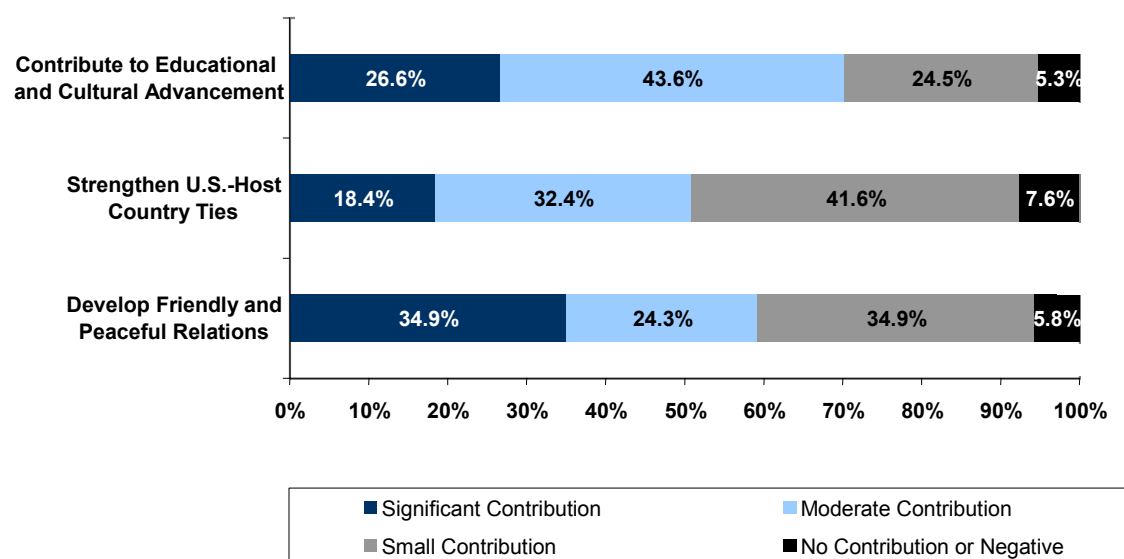
When the question is recast to assess the impact of the Fellows on understanding or adopting the values of democracy, economic reform, and human rights, the result is less emphatic: Just over half (53%) of the Fellows feel they imbued their students and colleagues with these values to a significant (16%) or moderate (37%) extent. These findings speak realistically to the need for sustained communication and interaction between the Fellows and their students and colleagues in order to break down long-held beliefs and impressions, and to acknowledge the challenge to increase acceptance of democratic principles.

Contributions to Education, Culture, and Strengthening Peaceful Relationships

Fellows report that their greatest contributions are to educational and cultural advancement in their host countries. More than two-thirds of Fellows report that they contribute either significantly (27%) or moderately (44%) to educational and cultural advancement in their host countries. Half of the

Fellows report that they make a significant or moderate contribution to strengthening U.S. ties with the host country and to developing friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the host country. EFLFs generally report higher levels of contributions than ETFs. Perhaps because of their positions, EFLFs have greater access to more influential members of the host country's society, while ETFs mostly teach undergraduate students.

Fellows' (ETFs and EFLFs) Assessments of Their Contribution to the English Language Fellows Program's Legislative Goals



Professional Legacies

Fellows leave behind a wide range of tangible results—books, curricula, and other instructional materials that they create or develop in collaboration with their colleagues. Some Fellows collaborate with colleagues to produce nationally distributed textbooks and tests. Others develop special-purpose curricula, such as business English, which prepare people for participation in global commerce. In many cases, Fellows establish the use of communicative language teaching methods, at least with individual teachers and colleagues, and sometimes in whole institutions. Overall, they leave behind better-trained teachers, more proficient students, and improved systems.

I continue to use communicative methods because I want to bring up the next generation of young people in a freer and more open manner.

(Russian colleague)

I left behind a group of talented local classroom teachers who had the skills to continue giving in-service teacher training workshops on their own.

(EFLF in Slovenia)

The study found evidence that Fellows' roles in facilitating colleagues' professional development and participation in other exchange programs also produce long-range impacts.

When some of our judges went on an exchange program to the U.S., visited the Library of Congress and saw the American perspective of government in action, they came back with a very different image of the country. Visiting and observing political and social life changes one's opinion. It makes you want to increase cooperation.

(Jordanian supervisor)

Cross-Cultural Legacies

Fellows encounter various reactions from their foreign students and colleagues, ranging from openness and receptivity to misconception and suspicion. Fellows are very aware that they may be the only Americans that their students meet, and that their personal interactions with colleagues, students, and neighbors may lead to generalizations about the United States. They recognize their responsibility to represent American culture; thus, they take a personal interest in the lives of those they meet and foster openness, debate, and innovative approaches to language instruction. Fellows succeed in finding common ground from which to build mutual understanding and trust.

Many students, teachers, and merchants would remember me as one of their neighbors. Many children in my neighborhood would remember my attempts at getting to know them, sharing food and trying to keep the termites away, or bargaining with the flower seller.

(ETF in a Middle Eastern country)

In Russia, a lot of the written things about American life are very stereotypical. I am grateful to [the Fellow] for telling me personal things about herself. I began to see her as a friend.

(Russian teacher speaking of her relationship with an EFLF)

One Fellow observed that when his students and colleagues took a liking to him personally, they developed a favorable opinion of the United States. Another Fellow noted a much more dramatic outcome, based on a longer period of interaction.

In my second year, a student told me that she used to hate Americans. But now, the student said, 'I feel stupid' about having thought that, because she knows I am OK.

(Balkans-based Fellow)

The Fellows' freedom to criticize American history and U.S. policies represents an indelible mark of democracy to colleagues and students from countries where such freedom does not exist. Their behaviors demonstrate how American culture and values manifest themselves, and this was duly noted.

The Fellows did not just try to proselytize about American culture. The staff would ask them about aspects of the culture. A lot was done and communicated through humor.

(Ukrainian colleague)

I am fascinated with American culture. I am impressed with how America has solved a lot of its problems. Like improving race relations.

(Russian teacher-trainee)

Accomplishments of Fellows

Instructional Services

During their assignments, Fellows undertake instructional activities that simultaneously benefit their students and trainees as well as enhance their professional skills. They design instructional strategies to support communication and critical thinking among students. More than 80 percent of the Fellows use techniques such as role-playing, simulation, and small group discussions. Nearly three-fourths of the Fellows give traditional lectures. The detailed percentage of these activities is as follows:

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-----|--------------------|-----|
| ▪ Role-Playing/Simulation | 88% | ▪ Peer Tutoring | 50% |
| ▪ Teacher Questioning | 86% | ▪ Case Studies | 42% |
| ▪ Small Group Discussion | 86% | ▪ Field Experience | 36% |

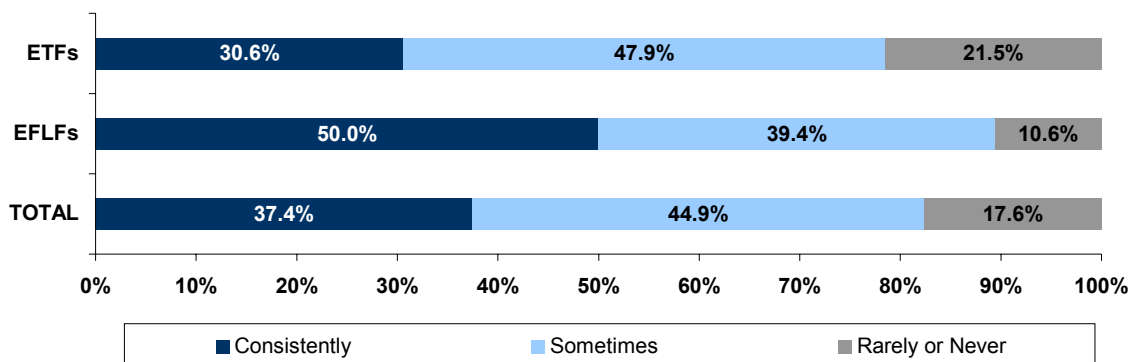
In addition to teaching, Fellows initiate activities to support instruction and enhance communication. More than 80 percent of Fellows create materials to supplement existing curricula or develop new curricula. Fellows also prepare audiovisual aids, write articles and books, and create tests and exams. The detailed percentage of these activities is as follows:

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|------------------|-----|
| ▪ Create Supplementary Materials | 88% | ▪ Write Articles | 33% |
| ▪ Create Curricula | 82% | ▪ Write Books | 19% |
| ▪ Create Audiovisual Aids | 43% | ▪ Create Exams | 18% |

Addressing Democracy, Economic Reform, and Human Rights

An important aspect of the curricular method is its emphasis on language for communication. Fellows lead and facilitate discussions of democratic principles, values, and diversity in the United States and in host countries. The EL Fellows Program not only provides the English language skills to better understand American culture, but also develops skills in critical thinking and debating that support the transition from totalitarianism to a democratic society. Three-fourths of the Fellows infuse their teaching with topics important to democracy, economic reform, or human rights, while 82 percent discuss democratic values, economic reform, and related issues in informal non-classroom settings.

Extent to Which Fellows Relate English Teaching to Democracy, Economic Reform, or Human Rights

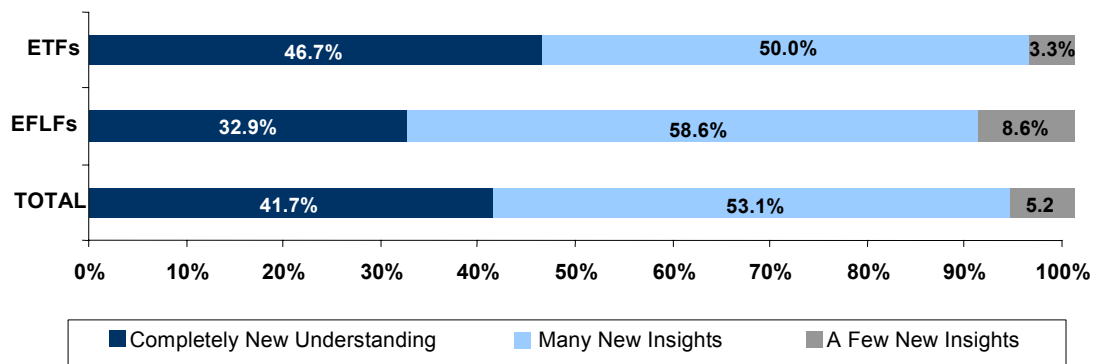


When we would talk about controversial issues, I tried to keep it away from actual Kyrgyz issues, because some of that was very sensitive. But I think they really liked the idea of exercises being based on having to express different points of views.
(ETF in Kyrgyzstan)

Cultural and Professional Development of Fellows

The Fellows are profoundly affected by their fellowship experience. Most Fellows have not visited their assigned country before their fellowship starts, although two-thirds begin their fellowship with some knowledge of the host country. Despite this background, more than half of the Fellows gain many new insights into their host country's culture; another 40 percent attain a completely new understanding of their host country's culture, language, society, government, and politics.

Knowledge Gained About Host Country from Fellowship Experience



I have a deep love of the Egyptian culture and feel that I will always have a connection there. I consider myself to be an ambassador for Arab culture and am constantly promoting the positive aspects of this culture and correcting Americans' misconceptions. I read [and] study the language and culture to this day.
(Former EFLF in Egypt)

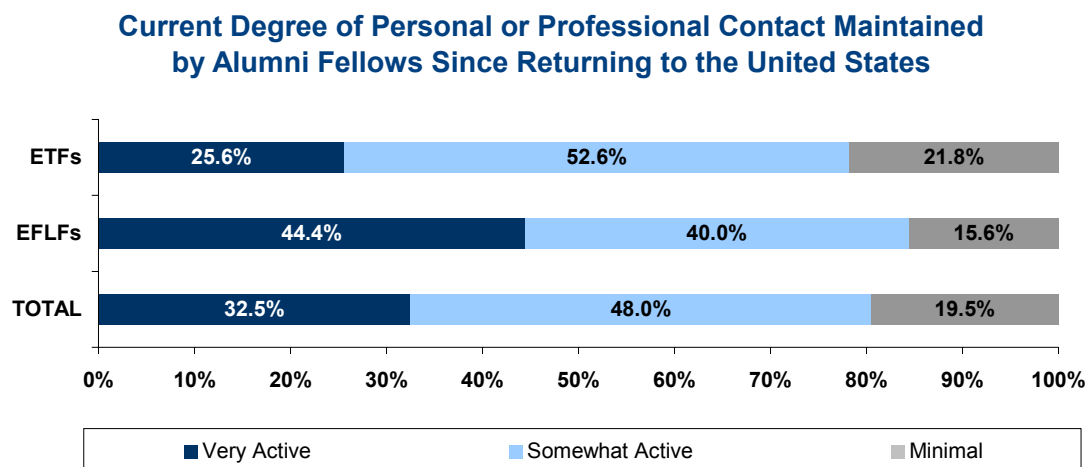
I really do feel that I'm a different person than I would have been without this kind of opportunity. It caused me to become a more open, flexible, tolerant, patient, and understanding person.
(Former ETF in the Czech Republic)

On many occasions, the EL Fellows Program provides Fellows with unique opportunities to grow professionally, to hone their skills, and to extend themselves to their professional limits.

Professionally, I grew tremendously. Because everything was open, fluid, without structure, and because the country had been so terribly isolated for the previous 50 years, the hunger for English and its growth made it possible to be involved in any kind of learning/teaching situation having to do with ELT.
(Former Fellow in Albania)

It was a good early job in ESL. It gave me lots of opportunities to teach/train and develop my craft, which was very useful to me professionally, as I stayed in ESL for several years after my English Teaching Fellowship.
(South American-placed ETF)

Fellows develop strong ties with students, colleagues and friends from their host countries. Their interest in the lives of those they meet overseas continues over the years. More than 80 percent of Fellows report that they maintain very active or somewhat active contact with host country students, friends, or colleagues.



Results for Fellows' Foreign Students, Trainees, Colleagues, and Host Institutions

Improved Language Proficiency

Four out of five Fellows (80%) report that the English language proficiency of their students and trainees improved significantly (36%) or moderately (44%) during their tenure.

Professional Benefits to Students

About half (49%) of the Fellows indicate their awareness of various U.S. Government exchange programs in the United States. In addition, they indicate that they identify opportunities for their students and trainees to pursue scholarships at U.S. universities and colleges and pursue the following Department of State exchange programs:

- Fulbright Program
- Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program
- Summer Program for Teachers

Professional Benefits to Colleagues and Institutions

The Fellows' professional colleagues benefit from contact with them. Nearly all colleagues acknowledge that both they and their students gain from interacting with well-trained, native English-speaking Americans at their institutions. The professional colleagues are sometimes as affected as the students by Fellows' innovations—particularly in countries where educational methods parallel oppressive political systems. The colleagues observe the methods, see their benefits, and model their teaching methods after those of the Fellows.

It was a shock to learn for the first time that you should get students to talk in class. I learned how to use communicative methods for the first time . . . [The Fellow] showed the potential of this method. She never imposed it.
(Ukrainian university teacher)

Fellows are also catalysts for the professional advancement of their colleagues; they help their colleagues find additional training, fellowships, and exchange programs to the United States. Throughout host institutions, colleagues acknowledge the important roles of some Fellows in making such experiences possible. Fellows also help colleagues obtain employment as English language teachers in other countries.

Ongoing Institutional Cooperation and Affiliations

Other important results of the program are ongoing professional and institutional linkages with the United States. About one-fourth of alumni EFLFs (27%) and 17 percent of alumni ETFs facilitate affiliations between their host institutions and U.S. universities either during or after their fellowships. Such affiliations support cross-national institutional agreements, formal partnerships, cooperation, and student and faculty exchanges.

Conclusions

The EL Fellows Program is a unique and valuable Department of State educational and cultural exchange program. The program directly improves the English language skills of thousands of Fellows' students, trainees and colleagues in non-English-speaking countries each year. In addition, the program indirectly improves the English language skills of hundreds of thousands more by strengthening English as a Foreign Language instructional programs in Fellows' host countries. Fellows' foreign students and trainees are increasingly able to access information about the United States via authentic direct print, broadcast, and electronic media, rather than solely through indirect, translated, and possibly controlled means. Fellow's colleagues learn the latest techniques in English language instruction. Fellows also facilitate exchange opportunities in the United States for their students, trainees, and colleagues.

The EL Fellows Program also provides direct benefits to the Fellows themselves. Fellows deepen their understanding and appreciation of their host country and its culture and people through their exchange experiences. Fellows also maintain their personal and professional contacts in their host countries for many years, sometimes building relationships between host countries and U.S. colleges and universities.

Most importantly, the EL Fellows Program supports the vision of the Fulbright-Hays Act and, via the enhancement of English language proficiency, strengthens those aspects of U.S. foreign policy that depend on effective communication, access to information, and economic opportunity throughout the world.

Highlights of Respondents' Feedback

In the words of Fellows . . .

For me . . . it is so hard to measure how much one seed planted in one student has grown since. What I think and feel (and hope) my biggest contribution was is that simply by doing things a bit differently than they were used to, by pushing them and really making them think deeply about something, by treating them more as humans than just students, that all of these influence them somehow and that, later on, they behave a bit differently than they would have without having had a class with John from the United States.
(Former EFLF in a former state of the Soviet Union)

I am much more patriotic but not in the flag-waving sort of way. I will never throw a scrap of food away without thinking about the gypsies combing through the dumpster outside my apartment on a daily basis. I do not fear being poor—there is no such thing as 'really' being poor in the United States. Nor do I fear the recent Hispanic immigrants to my community the way I know some of my neighbors do.
(Former EFLF in Bulgaria)

The Fellowship experience gave me a very good professional experience—i.e., creating an English language program for professionals from scratch with no help from anyone. (Fellow in Jordan)

The program benefits all sides, especially after 9/11. Americans think that everyone knows the United States, but there are many misimpressions. It is important for other peoples to meet Americans and discover how much there is in common.
(Former ETF in Malaysia)

In the words of host country colleagues . . .

They were typically American. They were very independent, punctual, did not require supervision, reliable, optimistic, smiling, never complaining, and responsible. (Ukrainian colleague)

Now we can help empower students to become more conscious of where they are going. The same thing happened to the faculty. They, too, became empowered to know better where they are going.
(Hungarian university teacher)

At that time (of the first Fellow), the English language needs were very different. Russian education tended to punish teachers who departed from established practice. It was loosening up by 1995 but the tradition was still very strong. The reaction of teachers ran from complete resistance to anything American to full acceptance. [The Fellow] went out of her way to try to introduce new ideas according to the level of resistance from students. She had to work very hard to change peoples' opinions.... Little by little, she got students to accept new ideas.
(Russian educator)

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For more information about the evaluation of the English Language Fellows Program, or to receive copies of this Executive Summary, please contact the Office of Policy and Evaluation at (202) 619-5307, by email at evaluations@pd.state.gov, or by mail at State Annex 44, 301 4th Street, SW, Room 336, Washington, D.C. 20547.

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